

CD 2012 -- 95



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF MUSIC

**2012-13**  
season

## **University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra**

David Briskin, Director of Orchestral Studies and Conductor  
Emily Kruspe, violin

Thursday, November 1, 2012  
7:30 p.m. MacMillan Theatre  
Edward Johnson Building

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# UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

David Briskin, Conductor

## PROGRAM

**Kikimora: Legend for orchestra, Op. 63**

**Anatoly Lyadov**  
(1855-1914)

**Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47**

**Jean Sibelius**  
(1756-1791)

Allegro moderato

Adagio di molto

Allegro, ma non tanto

Emily Kruspe, violin  
UTSO Concerto Competition Winner

## INTERMISSION

**The Firebird Suite (1919)**

**Igor Stravinsky**  
(1882-1971)

Introduction - The Firebird and its dance

The Princesses' Khorovod (Round)

Infernal Dance of King Kaschchei

Berceuse

Finale

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# Program Notes

ANATOLY LYADOV (1855-1914)

**Kikimora: Legend for orchestra,  
Op. 63 (1909)**

Famous for not composing *The Firebird* when Diaghilev offered the idea to him before turning to Stravinsky, Lyadov was a born procrastinator. Prokofiev, who studied with him at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, had no time for his teacher. He described Lyadov as “short, squat, and bald, with a *soupeçon* of a moustache and beard” and dismissed him as “lazy by nature and rather indifferent towards his teaching.” Lyadov’s chronic shyness and ruthless self-criticism contributed to his problems. His lack of ambition made him feel like ‘a grain of sand’ alongside the ‘gigantic mountain’ of his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov. He was intimidated by Rimsky-Korsakov’s facility and the ease with which he, Tchaikovsky and Glazunov composed. Lyadov preferred to escape his daily problems into a world of fantasy and the supernatural. “Art is a figment, a fairy-tale,” he once said. “Give me fairies and dragons, mermaids and goblins, and I will be happy.”

Lyadov was most comfortable with miniature forms, not the large-scale operas, symphonies and concertos that could have brought more fame. Many of his compositions are songs or piano pieces. His most famous orchestral pieces are three short, attractive tone-poems with descriptive programs based on Russian folk-tales. *Kikimora*, like the better-known tone poem *The Enchanted Lake*, incorporates music from an abandoned opera project – but is none the worse for that! Its delicate, skilfully controlled orchestration gives some idea of why Lyadov was admired by his Russian peers. *Kikimora*, a legendary witch in Russian folklore, is first portrayed as

a child in the mountain home of her sorcerer-father, where she is told fantastic tales from distant lands. Fully grown by seven – Lyadov tells us in a preface to the score – her head is the size of a thimble and her body thin as a blade of straw. The tone poem portrays *Kikimora* as she “blusters and crashes about from morning till evening and whistles and hisses from evening till midnight.”

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

**Violin Concerto in D minor,  
Op. 47 (1903, rev. 1905)**

Sibelius liked to say that while other composers served their public multi-coloured cocktails, he served ‘pure, cold water.’ But it was a stronger liquid that fuelled the Finnish composer when writing his much-loved Violin Concerto. Its slow movement, in which the violin sings its heart out in the richest part of its register, was drafted during an epic three-day hangover and the entire concerto was preceded and accompanied by one of the composer’s worst periods of alcoholism. Insecurity was the source of his problems. “When I am standing in front of a grand orchestra and have drunk a half-bottle of champagne, then I conduct like a young God. Otherwise I am nervous and tremble, feel unsure of myself, and then everything is lost,” he told his psychiatrist brother, Christian. Sibelius’s legendary insecurity had led him to abandon a career as a virtuoso violinist when he failed an audition to join the Vienna Philharmonic. Decades later, long after he had completed the Violin Concerto, he wrote, poignantly, in his diary: “Dreamt I was 12 years old and a virtuoso.” But, when he wrote the score of his only concerto, he already had the experience of his first two symphonies

and symphonic poems based on the Lemminkäinen legends behind him. No trace of his personal insecurity can be detected in its pages.

The violin writing is ferocious and demands much from the soloist. It's as though Sibelius was writing for the virtuoso soloist he himself never became. The violin remains in focus throughout, even when accompanying a symphonic texture. Structurally the score is taut. Even its mysterious and nostalgic opening melody, while appearing rhapsodic, is closely related to the other themes. The long, central cadenza of the first movement similarly has a structural rather than decorative function, taking the place of the customary development. The elegiac slow movement reaches deep, while the craggy and resolute finale remains buoyant with emphatic dance rhythms that memorably reminded critic Donald Tovey of a 'polonaise for polar bears.'

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)  
**Suite: The Firebird (1909-10/1919)**

Russian folklore was the specialty of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. So when Lyadov sat for months on a commission for the company's 1910 Paris season, the Russian impresario turned to the young Igor Stravinsky – who had already contributed two orchestrations of pieces by Chopin for the 1909 company production of *Les sylphides*. Sensing a vivid imagination in the 27 year-old composer's music, Diaghilev suggested an exotic and familiar Russian fairy tale, with a storyline and choreography by Michel Fokine, as the subject of the new ballet. Diaghilev would have known that Stravinsky's teacher was Rimsky-Korsakov, the master of brilliant, descriptive music. What he would not have known is that Stravinsky wanted to move in other

directions, away from the colourful picture postcard world of Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestration. However, the prospect of a prestigious Diaghilev commission set Stravinsky to work on the story of the Firebird and the ogre Kaschchei. He worked in a dacha belonging to the Rimsky-Korsakov family – and the resulting ballet score was to beat Rimsky-Korsakov at his own game. "Mark him well," Diaghilev said to the company's principal dancer Tamara Karsavina. "He is a man on the eve of celebrity."

*The Firebird* ballet opened June 25, 1910 at the Paris Opera House and was a sensation. It was also the beginning of a partnership that led to some of the most famous ballet scores and stage productions in the first half of the 20th century. The action of the ballet, with its contrast between the natural world of Ivan and the enchanted princess and the supernatural world of the Firebird and Kaschchei, is made in musical terms by the device of contrasting diatonic and chromatic elements. Rimsky-Korsakov had done much the same thing in his final ballet score, *Le coq d'or*. Stravinsky also borrowed the idea of horn and trombone glissandos from his former teacher. Even more strikingly, he borrowed what he later described as "the natural-harmonic strid glissando near the beginning, which the bass chord touches off like a Catherine-wheel [firework]." Stravinsky, previously known only to a handful of people in Russia, now found himself acclaimed throughout Europe as one of the most gifted and promising composers of the new century. The five-movement 1919 suite remains the best-known of three concert suites Stravinsky made from *The Firebird*, the seminal work that he was to conduct almost 1000 times during his career.

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# Biographies

A conductor renowned for the versatility of his repertoire and the depth of his musical interpretations, **DAVID BRISKIN** has been the Music Director and Principal Conductor of The National Ballet of Canada since 2006. In July 2008, he was appointed Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music and Conductor of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Prior to his appointment with the National Ballet, Mr. Briskin served as conductor with the American Ballet Theatre for seven years, leading performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York's City Center and in major opera houses throughout the world.

In demand as a guest conductor, Mr. Briskin has appeared with numerous ballet and modern dance companies throughout North America, including, among others, the New York City Ballet and the San Francisco Ballet. He also served as Conductor for The Juilliard School's Dance Division from 1993-2005. Later this season, he will make his debut at Covent Garden in London conducting the Royal Ballet.

In addition to his work in dance, Mr. Briskin has enjoyed great success on the concert stage. He has conducted the Pittsburgh, Detroit, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Windsor, Syracuse, Akron, Cincinnati Pops, and Singapore Symphony Orchestras; the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Juilliard Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica where he conducted the Latin American premiere of John Corigliano's monumental First Symphony.

Equally at home in the opera house, Mr. Briskin's opera schedule has taken him

throughout the U.S., Canada, and Europe, including performances of *La Boheme* in Italy; with the Calgary Opera, Manitoba Opera, Opera Carolina, Opera Columbus, New England Conservatory, Sarasota Opera, and Lake George Opera. For six years he served as the Music Director of the Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra, conducting annual performances of Handel's *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Briskin attended the Indiana University School of Music, and received a Bachelor of Music degree in orchestral conducting from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a Master of Arts degree from Queens College, City University of New York.

**EMILY KRUSPE**, violin, is currently in her fourth year of the undergraduate program at the University of Toronto, studying with Erika Raum and Yehonatan Berick. She began to play the violin at the age of three, and has attended numerous summer festivals such as the Domaine Forget chamber music program, the Banff Centre, and the Toronto Summer Music Festival. She has had master classes with many acclaimed violinists, including Don Weilerstein, Joel Smirnoff, Victor Danchenko, Ian Swensen, Kolja Lessing, Mariana Sirbu, Soovin Kim, Annalee Patipatanakoon, Miriam Fried, Lara St. John and Mark Fewer. Emily's quartet, Arkadas, was awarded U of T's Felix Galimir Chamber Music Award in 2012 and was invited to participate in the chamber program at the Banff Centre this past summer. She was awarded the Orford String Quartet Scholarship in 2012, provided by the Ontario Arts Foundation.

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James Kruspe, *concertmaster*  
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## VIOLIN II

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